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SUBJECT: IMET IN THAILAND -- KEY TOOL FOR ENGAGEMENT

1. The International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) has been a vital tool for almost 30 years to improve the Thai military's ability to develop core skills and competence. In addition to providing world-class training through a wide range of courses, IMET has helped us create a cadre of Thai leaders who understand U.S. strategic objectives and who -- as was illustrated in the quick agreement by Thai leaders to permit the United States to use Utapao Royal Thai Naval Air Base as a hub for tsunami relief activities throughout the region -- can be counted on to help us further our own national interests. Post offers this overview of IMET in Thailand for addressees to draw upon when they need to brief decision makers about the depth and importance of IMET in Thailand.

#### THE NUMBERS

2. The world-wide budget for IMET in FY06 is more than 90 million dollars. In 2005, Thailand received 2.5 million IMET dollars, making it the fourth largest recipient in the world after Turkey, Jordan and the Philippines. Congress approved 2.4 million dollars for Thailand in FY06. In FY05, IMET Programs worldwide trained more than 11,000 students including 460 Thai. Globally, IMET has increased worldwide from 49.96 million dollars in FY99 to 89.01 million in FY05. In FY 2005, we trained 460 Thai soldiers, sailors and airmen through IMET. Since FY98, we have trained 1,762 Thai personnel.

#### THE COURSES GIVE THAI AN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR OBJECTIVES

3. Technical courses have given Thai IMET students familiarity with U.S. systems, doctrine and methodology that promote interoperability and that have resulted in Thailand training on and later purchasing U.S. systems. IMET Professional Military Education (PME) programs have sent Thai officers to all of our top military institutions including the Air and Army War Colleges, the Navy Command College and the US Army and USMC Command and General Staff Colleges.

#### THAI PME CANDIDATES ARE CAREFULLY CHOSEN

4. For years now, Thai students selected for PME Programs, especially at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, have been top graduates of the Thai Armed Forces General Staff College. Upon their return to Thailand, students must teach at the Thai Staff College for two years and are then recruited by senior officers as staff aides or placed into other positions of authority because they are deemed to have the most current understanding of U.S. military doctrine. Since aides to senior staff officers frequently become senior staff themselves later in their careers, this "Leavenworth pipeline" has been invaluable in ensuring we have access at the highest level of the Thai military. Thai CGSC graduates have a strong alumni association that also serves as a way for us to maintain links with these officers.

#### IMET GRADUATES ARE IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE

5. Scores of IMET graduates staff key positions throughout the Thai military. Key examples at MOD include GEN Apichart Penkitti, Director of Policy and Plans and his deputy, LTG Naraset Israngkura Na Ayudhya; the JAG, GEN Attaporn Charoenpanich; and GEN Sirichai Thunyasiri, the Permanent Secretary. At Royal Thai Supreme Command, Chief of the Joint

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Staff GEN Lertrat Ratanavanich, Deputy Supreme Commander GEN Boonsrang Niumpradit, former J7 Director MG Nopparat Yodvimol, J4 VADM Suchart Hongprasong, J5 Director LTG Pitsanu Uraileert and, J6 Director LTG Anusorn Teptada are all IMET graduates. The CINC of the Royal Thai Army, GEN Sonthi Boonyaratglinm, as well as his chief of staff are IMET veterans. Royal Thai Air Force CINC Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk and his Air Combat Commander are alumni as are Royal Thai Navy CINC ADM Sampop Amrapala and his Chief of Staff.

6. RTSC Chief of Staff General Lertrat, a Leavenworth Honor Graduate, was the Thai military officer responsible for overseeing tsunami operations in Phuket. RTSC Deputy GEN

Boonsrang was a PKO force commander in East Timor and is a graduate of West Point. LTG Niphat Thonglek, the Commander of Thai forces presently in Aceh as part of an EU-led peace mission, is a graduate of CGSC. Even outside the military, IMET graduates retain influence in Thailand. Privy Councillor GEN (ret.) Surayud Chulanont, a former Army CINC and Supreme Commander, is one of the highest regarded elder statesmen of the country. He attended CGSC and is a member of the Leavenworth Hall of Fame. The current National Security Advisor, LTG Winai Phattiyakul, was a force commander in East Timor and a CGSC alumnus. Former Prime Minister and Army commander Chavalit Yongchaiyut, a CGSC graduate, has been called back into government service as a key advisor on poverty. CGSC alumnus and former Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda is presently President of the Privy Council and one of the most influential men in Thailand.

#### PROMOTING OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

17. IMET graduates have been instrumental in helping us to win Thai support for key U.S. objectives. Recently, Thailand endorsed the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a major G-8 effort to train 15,000 Asian peace keepers by 2010.

IMET graduates helped us to convince civilian leaders to make Thailand a regional training center for peace keepers. We are convinced that IMET alumni officers' familiarity with U.S. doctrine, methodology and structure has been pivotal in winning Thai support to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Thai military leaders' growing professionalization obtained through IMET led to commitments to make PKO deployments to East Timor, Cambodia, Aceh and elsewhere.

18. The massive and successful U.S. military response to the 2004 tsunami has created goodwill that we can build upon for years in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and throughout the region. That response was possible, in large part, due to the Thai decision to quickly agree to permit us to use their country as a hub for regional relief. IMET alumni in Thailand were among the key decision makers and advisors who made that decision possible. Thus IMET, coupled with our comprehensive and large-scale exercise program, were major factors in making Operation Unified Assistance a success.

#### PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

19. IMET is a flexible tool that has allowed us to promote human rights within the Thai military. For example, after the October 25, 2004 Tak Bai incident (during which poorly trained Thai military and civilian security forces forced nearly 1,300 Thai Muslim protesters into trucks to be transported to a military base nearly three hours away, resulting in the deaths of 78 protesters en route), JUSMAGTHAI quickly set up a comprehensive series of human rights courses administered by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) for Thai officers and soldiers rotating to southern Thailand -- thereby helping us to prevent future tragedies.

#### HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

10. The Department's commitment to expanding IMET worldwide over the past few years has had a major positive impact on our ability to further U.S. strategic interests in Thailand and the region. IMET, much like the Fulbright Program, is a long-term investment with quantifiable results. Without question, IMET has contributed to making Thailand a more effective and reliable coalition partner that has join us in making the transformation from the cold war era to the new security challenges of the present -- and future.

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